

# DETERMINANTS OF EDUCATIONAL CONTINUATION DECISIONS OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIA: AN APPLICATION OF THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

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## ABSTRACT

*The determinants of educational and occupational continuation of younger people in India are still attributed to their socio economic background (primary effects). This deters the government from taking steps to bring the disadvantaged youngsters' higher education, since there is not much one can do to improve the social origin factors. The secondary effects of social origin are often neglected with a conviction that these effects have still not come to play a role as a determining factor in educational continuation decisions of Indian students. The present study was thus conducted to understand the determinants of students' continuation decisions to higher education. Theory of planned behavior is tested here, using its constructs. The study was conducted among 300 higher secondary school students of Kerala state in India. Schools and classes were selected randomly and data were collected from intact classrooms. Achievement test scores were collected from school records. The questionnaire used by Ajzen is modified and validated for the use in this study for assessing the planned behavior of students. The continuation decisions, the dependent variable are considered as a binary variable and the response was sought with a question of whether they will continue to higher education or not. The results of the present study give a clear indication of the manifestation of secondary effects in higher education decisions. Attitude toward Behavior and Perceived Behavioral Control have significantly predicted the intention of higher secondary students for continuing to higher education. Subjective Norms are found not predicting the decisions.*

*Keywords: Educational Continuation Decision, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attitude Toward Behavior, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, Theory of Reasoned Action, Rational Action Theory.*

## INTRODUCTION

Issues of inequalities in accessing Education, Educational attainment, and Educational continuation decisions of students at various stages and the factors that cause them have all been interesting areas of research for Educationists and Sociologists. Research on the relationships among social background, school performance, and educational attainment has gained attention among educational investigators most recently. According to some investigators, there exists a strong relationship between the parents' social background and their offspring's achievement (Bourdieu, 1973; Mare, 1981; Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993). The enduring impact of socio-economic background on individuals' educational attainment is one of the best-established results of

modern stratification research (Bidwell & Friedkin, 1988). Boudon (1974) categorizes various influences of social background as primary (indirect) and secondary (direct) effects. Primary effects are responsible for variation in the level of performance throughout the educational career. Secondary effects find expression when a child requires making decision about the choice at a particular transition stage of education. Boudon's model reveals that primary effects reflect in the first transition, not at later transitions. On the other hand, the influences of secondary effects go on at later stages.

Most of the past researches dealt with socio economic and academic deficiencies which cause for discontinuation of education. In contrary to it, the present study looks at the issue of educational continuation

decision of higher secondary school students from a different perspective based on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The theory has been successful in providing a better understanding of such various behaviors as exercising, donating blood, adhering to a low-fat diet, wearing a safety helmet and choosing a career among many more (Ajzen, 2001; Armitage & Conner, 2001; The theory has been used to predict the completion of high school of African American Students by conducting four years longitudinal study (Davis et.al, 2002). The major focus of this study is on the specific beliefs and attitudes that are closely related to one's intentions to continue education. By focusing on specific beliefs and attitudes, the theory and the study do not reject or diminish the influence of objective environmental factors such as socio economic factors. These factors find expression in one's intentions and behavior by indirectly influencing them. For the same reason, this study also look into the influence of locality, gender, community and religion on academic achievement and the constructs of the theory of planned behavior (intention is not analyzed in this study with respect to these demographic variables). Because, it can be found that, some students who perform well academically may discontinue the education after certain transition stage. On the other hand, it can also be seen that some students who do not perform as good as other students who discontinue the education may continue education. This phenomenon highlights the importance of identifying the underlying factors operating as determinants of educational continuation decisions as secondary effects. Therefore, the study deliberately tries to find out the correlation between them. Thus, it helps to understand the influence of primary and secondary effects on the educational continuation decisions since it processes in its operation. The evaluation of the relative importance of primary and secondary effects is the aim of a growing body of literature (Erikson et al., 2005; Stocke, 2007). Since the primary effects are an explanatory variable for educational continuation, this study has taken the achievement of the students into account for broadening the horizon of the phenomenon of decision making. This

study makes an attempt to examine the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in predicting the intentions of higher secondary school students for higher education. The study also makes an attempt to identify the underlying cognitive and other components which determine the intentions of an individual, specifically students. By doing so, early interventions can be done through which the intentions can be altered.

## **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### ***The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)***

The Theory of Planned Behavior is introduced by Ajzen (1985) and it has been used in various disciplines for long years. The major purpose of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is to predict to what extent a particular behavior will be performed or not. According to this theory, prediction of an individual's Intentions to perform various kinds of behaviors can successfully be done by identifying and analyzing the three conceptually independent determinants of intention, Attitudes toward the Behavior, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control. The model representing the theory of planned behavior was also found to be greatly superior to an alternative model based on the theory of reasoned action, a version that does not include perceived behavioral control as a predictor of intention and behavior.

### ***Intention***

Intention refers to the cognitive representation of one's readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is commonly considered as the immediate antecedent of the actual performance or target behavior. Though it is not possible to have a perfect positive as a relation between intention of an individual and his or her actual behavior, it can be used as a proxy measure for predicting one's target behavior. Ajzen defined intention in the original derivation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (and its other theoretical constructs) in terms of trying to perform a given behavior rather than in relation to actual performance. However, it was shown in the early work with this model that, there is a strong correlation between measures of the model variables that asked about trying to perform a given

behavior and measure that dealt with actual performance of the behavior (Schifter & Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

### *Attitude toward Behavior*

In every individual, this psychological tendency inherently exists in the form of evaluation covering all types and categories of evaluation, both overt and covert, or in cognitive, affective and conative forms. Formation of attitude toward behavior takes place by the combination of one's own beliefs (behavioral beliefs) and evaluation of a particular behavior (outcome evaluations).

### *Subjective Norms*

Subjective norm which is a social factor refers to one's own estimate about social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior. It is the influence of people who are important or closest to the individual on the social environment on his behavioral intention. In another sense, it is individuals' beliefs about how they should behave according to other people in one or another way important to them. Attitude towards behavior is a role of belief in the behavior that will be performed, while subjective norms are a function of one's beliefs that are formed by others in one's life (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975)

### *Perceived Behavioral Control*

It concerns about one's perceived ease or difficulty in performing one particular behavior (Ajzen, 2001). It refers to one's perceptions about the ability to perform a given behavior. It reflects to what extent an individual feel to perform the behavior. It has two components: how much a person has control over the behavior and the degree of confidence an individual possesses about being able to perform or not perform the behavior. Both situational and internal factors have a major role in inhibiting or facilitating the target behavior.

### **Related Studies**

Davis, E. Larry, Ajzen, Icek (2002), explored high school completion, applying the Theory of Planned Behavior by conducting a longitudinal study among African-American students. Male and female high school students aged 14 to 17 completed a theory of planned behavior (I. Ajzen, 1991) questionnaire early in their 2<sup>nd</sup>

year. Intentions to complete the year were accurately predicted from attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes were related to beliefs about short and long term consequences; subjective norms reflected perceived expectations of family, teachers, and friends; and control considerations included requisite academic abilities, conflict with peers and teachers, and distracting life conditions, Intentions to a lesser extent, perceived behavioral control, predicted graduation almost 3 years later. The findings indicate opportunities for early interventions. Perceived behavioral control made a particularly strong contribution to the prediction of intentions, indicating that many students were concerned about their ability to overcome obstacles in their lives that might prevent them from carrying out their intentions to stay in school.

Huda, Nurul, Rini, Nova, Mardoni, Yosi. et.al (2012) conducted a study which aimed to determine the effect of attitudes, subjective norms, and control behavior based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, on Muzakki's intention to pay Zakah. This study involved 247 muzakki participants responding to 300 questionnaires. Using the method of multiple linear regressions for data analysis, it was found that Attitudes and Control Behavior variables have a positive and significant effect on the muzakki intention variable, while Subjective norms do not. The variables of Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Control Behavior each contributed 4.62 %, 2.88 % and 8.5 % to the muzakki intention variable. The overall contribution value of Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Control Behavior variables to muzakki's intention variable is 16 %. This indicates that 84 % of muzakki's intention to pay is influenced by other variables not analyzed in this study.

Zi, Yan. and Kuen-fung, Sin (2014) did a study aimed at providing explanation and prediction of the teachers' inclusive education intentions and behavior under TPB. The main components of TPB were implemented in a survey of 841 teachers from Hong Kong schools in the context of inclusive education. The structural equation modeling results show that TPB fitted the data well. Identified attributes, including teachers' attitude towards

inclusive education, feeling social pressure from important others to carry out inclusive education, and confidence on professional training for involved staff, were found to exert significant predictive power on teachers' intention to implement inclusive education. This intention, together with the confidence on professional training for involved staff, predicts their actual inclusive practice. Teachers' perception of social pressure and adequacy of professional training greatly contribute to predict their intention and behavior towards inclusive education, respectively. TPB appears to be a sound theoretical framework for understanding teachers' inclusive practice. The results have strong implications for teacher empowerment and professional training in inclusive education.

Underw, Poodaul R. (2012) in his research, applies Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to anticipate the impact of the Japanese National curriculum for English, by exploring the beliefs of senior high school teachers regarding the integration of grammar with communication-oriented teaching. The findings imply that, for some teachers, adoption will be hindered, firstly, by misconceptions regarding high-stakes examinations, resulting in unfavorable attitudes and perceptions of social pressure to reject reform; and secondly, by insufficient resources, such as time and training.

Carrie Lijuan, Wang, Amy S, Ha. (2013) investigated factors determining the teaching behavior of pre-service Physical Education (PE) teachers towards a constructivist approach, likewise referred to as Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU). Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was applied to guide the formulation of research purpose and the design. Six pre-service teachers participated in this study. Data collection consisted of documentation, systematic observation and interviews. These data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Findings indicated that, TGfU implementation by pre-service teachers is problematic. Three groups of TPB factors, including attitude (i.e. attitude towards TGfU), social norm (i.e. cooperating teachers, university supervisors, school teachers and pupils), and perceived behavior control (i.e. space, class duration, equipment,

TGfU conceptual understanding, technical level of pupils and classroom discipline) were identified to determine intention of pre-service teachers to adopt TGfU and subsequent TGfU teaching behavior. Among these factors, perceived behavior control was the most significant predictor.

Taylor, Rachel (2014) used, TPB to explore the drivers behind students' subject choice at A-level, specifically focusing on students' intentions to study physics and media studies. Multiple regression analyses supported the predictive validity of the theory in this context, with the three predictor variables (attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control) accounting for 66% of the variance in students' intentions to study physics and 68% of the variance in students' intentions to study media studies. Furthermore, for both subjects, attitude and subjective norm were found to be the significant predictors of intentions. Hence, students with higher intentions to study physics or media studies exhibited a more positive attitude towards choosing this subject and perceived greater social pressure from significant others. Analysis of the beliefs underlying students' subject choices suggested that, the influence of parents was particularly important to students, as were the beliefs about the positive outcomes of choosing physics or media studies in terms of student's future career and education prospects. This suggests that, initiatives aimed at increasing the uptake of subjects such as physics in the future might be best targeted in these areas.

Ajzen, Icek. Drivr, B.L (1991) studied the understanding of leisure participation applying TPB. Salient behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, theoretically the basic determinants of behavior, were assessed with respect to five leisure activities: (1) spending time at the beach, (2) jogging or running, (3) mountain climbing, (4) boating, and (5) biking. College students completed a questionnaire containing measures of these beliefs and of global expressions of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. One year later, the participants reported how often they had performed each behavior in the preceding of 12 months. Behavioral beliefs were found to partition into beliefs

about affective reactions and beliefs about costs and benefits. Participation in leisure activities was influenced by these affective and instrumental beliefs, as well as by normative beliefs about the expectations of important others (subjective norms) and by control beliefs about required resources and other factors that impede or facilitate leisure participation.

## **Need and Significance of the Study**

The role of education in contributing to the wellbeing of an individual and the society has been widely accepted. It is observable that, educated people make more money which helps in improving the socio-economic conditions of society which has a major impact on educational attainment, school performance and educational continuation decisions of students. It will also pave the way for socio economic mobility. The expansion of education narrows down social inequalities which is a major hindrance for the creation of a healthy democratic society. The fact that people respect people with educations is more than those who do not, adds another dimension on the status of an individual in a society.

Accessing and continuing education till the final goal is achieved is of paramount important for getting proper benefits. It is observable in society that, there is a tendency of discontinuing education by some students who perform better than other students who continue education. By this phenomenon, there is a huge loss of human resource and potentialities. It has to be utilized effectively for the wellbeing of an individual and the society. Identification and nurturing of favorable beliefs and evaluation of education continuation which function as motivational factors irrespective of the socio economic or any other background factors, to some extent, will be a solution for this problem. It sheds light into the necessity of a type of investigation, which emphasizes on such personal beliefs and self-efficacy. Some specific personal beliefs and attitudes play a major role in determining one's intention to perform or not perform the behavior. It does not always happens and easily possible to change the aforementioned factors for creating a positive attitude towards higher education. Identification and enrichment of such beliefs and attitudes that create

a positive intention towards higher education will be helpful for effective early intervention programs.

## **Methodology**

### ***Population and Sample***

All higher secondary school students in Malappuram District of Kerala State, India during the academic year 2014-15 are the target population. Higher secondary schools in this study include both Government and Private schools. The study was conducted among 300 higher secondary school students. Two hundred and seventeen students were drawn from rural schools and 83 from urban schools.

### ***Tools Used***

#### ***Questionnaire of Theory of Planned Behavior***

The questionnaire of Theory of Planned Behavior used by Ajzen is modified and validated for the use in this study. It consists of 22 items for the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior. Responses are taken on a 5 point rating scale except for the first question where yes or no response is adopted to understand the intention of the students for continuation of education after plus two.

#### ***Socio-Economic Schedule***

A socio-economic schedule is used for collecting the background data of the students.

## **Objectives of the Study**

- To study the Educational continuation decisions of higher secondary school students.
- To study the higher secondary school students' Attitude Towards the Behavior (ATB) in relation to Educational Continuation Decisions.
- To study the higher secondary school students' Subjective Norms (SN) in relation to Educational Continuation Decisions.
- To study the higher secondary school students' Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) in relation to Educational Continuation Decisions.
- To study whether gender differentials exist among higher secondary school students with respect to:

Attitude toward the behavior,

Subjective Norms and  
Perceived behavioral control.

- To find out the most significant predictor responsible for the intention of the students to access higher education.
- To find out the predictors responsible for the intention of the students to access higher education.
- To find out the interacting predictors (combinations of two and three) responsible for the intention of the students to access higher education.

### Hypotheses

- There is no gender difference in the scores of constructs of the planned behavior among the higher secondary school students with respect to:

Attitude towards behavior.  
Subjective norms and  
Perceived behavioral control.

- The following factors do not predict the intention of the students to access higher education.

Attitude towards behavior.  
Subjective norms and  
Perceived behavioral control.

### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

#### Differential Analysis

Table 1 shows the performance of the students on the constructs of Attitude Toward Behavior and the Subjective Norms is an average and the students' performance on the construct of Perceived Behavioral Control is above average. There is a small standard error mean which indicates that the pairs of the sample for the population

Variables	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean
Attitude Toward Behavior	1.34	0.561	0.048
	1.17	0.395	0.031
	1.58	0.661	0.056
Subjective Norms	1.30	0.501	0.039
	2.23	0.697	0.060
Perceived Behavioral Control	2.08	0.657	0.051

Table 1. The mean score values of constructs of Planned Behavior

have very similar mean.

#### Gender and Attitude toward Behavior

The hypothesis tested here is that "there is no gender difference among higher secondary school students with respect to the scores of Attitude toward Behavior". The results are given in the Table 2.

The values of mean between male and female (Male=1.34 and Female=1.17) show that, there is a difference between them in terms of the scores of Attitude Toward Behavior. On an average level, the male participants performed better (M: 1.34, SE: 0.48) than female in attitude toward the Behavior,  $t(df) = 2.976(296)$ ,  $P(.004) < .05$ . Hence, there is a significant difference in the scores of Attitude toward Behavior of different groups of students based on their gender at 0.05 significant level. So the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, there is an influence of gender on the scores of Attitude toward Behavior. The effect size for the difference is calculated to understand the nature of the difference. In this case, effect size ( $r$ ) = 0.14. It indicates that, there is a small size effect. That is to say that, in this case, it explains 1.4 % of the total variance between male and female. Here the standard error is small (0.048 for male and 0.031 for female) which indicates that, the pairs of the sample for the population have very similar mean. So it increases the possibility for generalizing the result into the population.

#### Gender and Subjective Norms

The hypothesis tested here is that "there is no gender difference among higher secondary school students with respect to the scores of Subjective Norm (SN)". The results are given in Table 3.

The values of Mean between male and female (Male=1.58 and Female=1.30) show that, there is a difference between them in terms of the scores of subjective norms. On an average level, the male

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Std.Error	df	t-Value	Sig.Value	
Gender	Male	55	1.34	0.561	0.048	296	2.976	0.004
	Female	94	1.17	0.395	0.031			

Table 2. The t- test for Significant difference between the scores of Attitude toward the Behavior with respect to Gender

participants performed better (M: 1.58, SE: 0.056) than female participants in Subjective Norm construct,  $t(df) = 4.040(296)$   $P(.000) < 0.05$ . Hence, there is a significant difference in the scores of Subjective Norms of different groups of students based on their gender at 0.05 significant level. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. It reveals that, there is an influence of gender on the scores of Subjective Norm. The effect size for the difference is calculated to understand the nature of the difference. In this case, effect size is  $(r) = 0.22$ . The result shows that, there is a small effect size. It means that, effect is accountable for 0.66 % total variance. Here, the standard error is small (0.056 for male and 0.039 for female) which indicates that, the pairs of the sample for the population have very similar mean. So, it increases the possibility for generalizing the result into the population.

### Gender and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

The hypothesis tested here is that "there is no gender difference among higher secondary school students with respect to the scores of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)". The results are presented in the Table 4.

The values of Mean between male and female (Male = 2.23 and Female = 2.08) show that, there is a difference between them in terms of the scores of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). On an average level, the male participants performed better (M: 2.23, SE: 0.60) than the female in Perceived Behavioral Control,  $t(df) = 1.87(298)$ ,  $P(0.64) > .05$ . Hence, there is a significant difference between subjective norms and different groups of students based on their gender at 0.05 significant level. The difference is not significant. So the null hypothesis is accepted. So there is no influence of gender on the scores of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). Here the standard error is small (.060 for male and .051 for female)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Std.Error	df	t-Value	Sig.Value
Gender Male	55	1.58	0.661	0.056	296	4.040	0.000

Table 3. The t - test for Significant Difference Between the Scores of Subjective Norm with respect to Gender

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Std.Error	df	t-Value	Sig.Value
Gender Male	55	2.23	0.697	0.060	298	1.872	0.64

Table 4. The t-test for significant difference between the scores of Perceived Behavioral Control with respect to Gender

which indicates that the pairs of the sample for the population have very similar mean. So it increases the possibility for generalizing the result into the population.

### Binomial Logistic Regression

Logistic regression was run to find the most significant predictor of intention to continue to higher education from among the constructs of Planned Behaviors: Attitude toward the Behavior, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral control. For the factor analysis, a forward stepwise method was used. So, initial model is derived using only the constant in the regression equation. The table history shown in Table 5 shows that, the log-likelihood of this baseline models is 13.404. This represents the fit of the most basic model to the data. The output given in Table 5 shows a contingency table for the model. It can be seen that, all students are predicted as if they all wanted to continue higher education. This prediction is 100%, according to those who actually said yes. Overall, the model correctly classified 99.7 % of the students.

Table 6 summarizes the model (variables in the equation) and at this stage, this entails quoting the value of the constant (b0) which is equal to 5.7. The table labelled, variables not in the equation, shown that the chi square statistics for all the co variables which are significant at 0.01 level. This statistics shows that, the coefficients for the variables not in the model are significantly different from zero, in other words, the addition of one or more of these

Iteration	-2 Log likelihood	Coefficients Constant
1	81.089	1.987
2	32.821	3.092
3	18.401	4.058
4	14.313	4.875
Step 0	13.478	5.440
6	13.405	5.669
7	13.404	5.700
8	13.404	5.700

a.Constant is included in the model.  
b.Initial -2 Log Likelihood: 13.404

Table 5. Iteration History

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	
Step 0	Constant	5.700	1.002	32387	1	.000	299000

Table 6. Variable in the Equation

variables to the model will significantly affect the predictive power.

Roa's efficient scale statistic is calculated and except for Subjective Norms scores on all main effect variables, and interaction variables (between two and also between three) have significant scores at  $P < 0.01$  and could potentially make a contribution to the model. However, Subjective Norm alone does not look likely to be a good predictor because its score statistics is non-significant at  $P > 0.05$ . The variable that will be selected for inclusion will be the attitude toward Behavior. Since, it has the highest value for the score statistics (13.3).

Table 7 shows the summary statistics about the new model where, only one constant was included in the model.  $-2L = 13.4$ , but now, when Attitude toward behavior has been included, 13 is reduced to 0. This reduction tells that, the model is better at predicting the intention of a person to continue or not continue to higher education. Table 8 shows the Omnibus tests of Model Coefficients and Table 9 gives the model Summary.

From Table 10, the b coefficient -2.502 differs significantly from zero. Thus, it is assumed that the predictor is making a significant contribution as the predictor of the outcome, that is, educational continuation decision.

The most significant predictor is the Attitude toward

Variables (Step0)	Score	df	Sig.
Total ATB	13.303	1	0.000
Total SN by Total ATB	7.459	1	0.006
Total ATB by Total PBC	9.643	1	0.002
Total SN by Total PBC	6.082	1	0.014
Total ATB, Total SN by Total PBC	7.367	1	0.007
Total SN	2.620	1	0.106
Total PBC	6.942	1	0.008

Table 7. Variable not in the Equation

Steps	Chi square	df	Sig.
Step	13.404	7	0.05
Block	13.404	7	0.05
Model	13.404	7	0.05

Table 8. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

-2 Log likelihood	Cox and Snell ( $r^2$ )	Nagelkerker ( $r^2$ )
0.00	0.44	1.000

Table 9. Model summary

Wald Statistics	Expected B	S.E	Wald Statistics	df	Significance	Expected (b)
	-2.502	0.106	0.000	1	1.00	0.82

Table 10. Variables in the Equation

Variables	Score	df	Sig.
Step 0			
Total ATB	13.303	1	0.000
Total SN by Total ATB	7.459	1	0.006
Total ATB by Total PBC	9.643	1	0.002
Total SN by Total PBC	6.082	1	0.014
Total ATB, Total SN and by Total PBC	7.367	1	0.007
Total SN	2.620	1	0.106
Total PBC	6.942	1	0.008

Table 11. Predictors of Intentions to continue to Higher Education (Educational Continuation Decisions)

Behavior (13.3). Subjective Norm seems to be the construct that does not contribute to the prediction of students' intention to continue to higher education (2.62). This value is not significant (0.106) (Table 11). But it can be noted that, the Subjective Norms has a predictive power in the case of its interaction with Perceived Behavioral Control alone. Subjective Norms have a predictive power in the case of its interaction with Attitude toward Behavior also. All other factors also seem to be predicting the intentions on its own and also in interaction with other constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that, all constructs of the planned behavior except Subjective Norms turned out as predictors of students' intentions of continuing to higher education, though the most significant predictor is Attitude toward Behavior. Figure 1 is the model applied in this study.

## Results and Discussion

It has been revealed that, many past studies have focused and revealed the influence of socio economic status, parental education, peer relations, drug and alcohol use, school climate, class size and participation in extra-curricular activities on education continuation decision (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Battin, et al., 2000; Cairns & Neckerman, 1989; Rumberger, & Russel 2001). Results of an investigation which is conducted by Rute Cardoso and Dorte (2007) indicates that, early parenthood has a strong impact of driving teenagers out of school. Extreme poverty is another factor which reduces the students' school attendance, as children who have suffered hunger at some point in their lives are less likely to

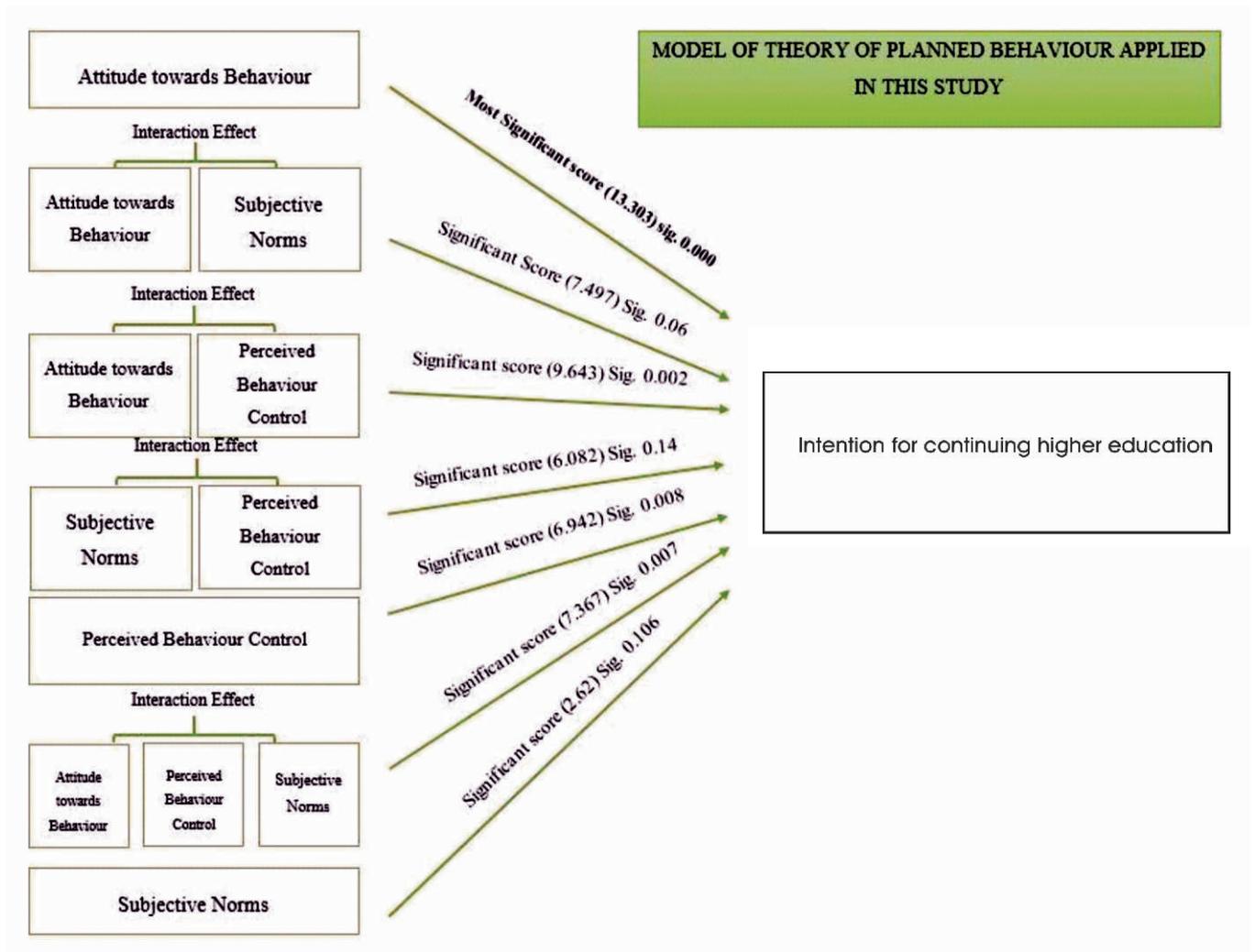


Figure 1. Depicts Model of Planned Behavior

attend school. Some factors which not only affect the performance of the children, but also ends it in the form of their dropout from school are uneducated parents, teachers' behavior, low mental ability, bad habits, bad peer group and scarcity of educated people in the community. A study which focuses on dropouts from the middle school and examines the issue from both individual and institutional perspectives revealed that at the individual level, the results identified a number of family and school experience factors that influence the decision to leave school, with grade retention being the single most powerful predictor. At the institutional level, the results revealed that, the mean dropout rates vary widely between schools and that most of the variation can be explained by differences in the background characteristics of students.

The present study, in contrary to what has been explained in the previous paragraph or past studies, focused on specific beliefs and attitudes related to the intention to continue education in a certain transition stage and the results suggested that, such a focus can provide very useful additional information about the discontinuation of the higher secondary school students.

Intentions to continue education after plus two were predicted very well from the students' personal attitudes toward Education Continuation. This result is supported by the study, which investigates the determinants of students' intention to adopt online teaching evaluation at the end of semester where it reveals that, attitude is the most important determinant of intention (Weng et al., 2014). This is also consistent with many previous studies that have

stated similar findings which generally support the important motivational influence of attitudes in the prediction of intentions in diverse behavioral domains (Ajzen, 1991; Sheeran Paschal & Taylor, 1999).

In the present study, Subjective Norms are not found as significant predictor in relation to the intention of students to continue education after plus two. This is supported by the study that is conducted in relation to Muzakki's intention to pay Zakah where subjective norm is a weak predictor (2.88%) of the intention of Muzakki (Huda, N, 2012). Another study which investigates the factors determining the teaching behavior of pre-service physical education teachers towards a constructivist approach revealed that, perceived behavior control was the most significant predictor. In the present study, the perceived behavior control is the second most significant predictor of the intention.

The present study shed light into the applicability of the theory of planned behavior to examine the intention of education continuation decision of higher secondary school students. By focusing on specific beliefs and attitudes concerning the intention to continue education after plus two, it is possible to understand the determinants of intentions of higher secondary students for continuing education after plus two. That is to say that based on this study, it can be inferred that by improving the favorable beliefs about the consequences of their continuing education after plus two and they judging positively the outcomes of it will be possible to drive the young to higher education which is a major goal of education in any country. The study also demands the need of improving favorable perceptions about the ability and confidence to proceed in the way of continuing education irrespective of real life problems and favorable or unfavorable attitude and actions of others especially those who are important and closest to them.

### **Educational Implications**

Based on the findings of the present study, it can be stated that, there is an urgent need of early intervention programs which focus on improving the attitude toward the education continuation in schools for creating a

favorable belief and evaluation of the same. Because the results of the study shows that, the intention to go for higher education is determined by Attitude toward Behavior. The result of the present study reveals another important predictor of the intention to go for higher education is the Perceived Behavioral Control. So by focusing on this aspect, the intention of higher secondary school students to go for higher education can be strengthened. Both of the aforementioned aspects can be included in the curricular and co-curricular activities.

For avoiding wastage of already developed academic ability due to the discontinuation of the students whose level of academic performance is higher than those who continue education, various intervention programs can be conducted with the purpose of creating a favorable attitude toward education continuation among students and the people who are important to them such as parents, neighbors, peer group, teachers, and so on.

### **Conclusion**

The present study is a contribution to the field of education due to its focus on the aspects of education continuation decision of plus one students which is a contradiction to the much discussed aspects of socio-economic and other environment oriented studies. The determinants of educational and occupational continuation of younger people in India is attributed still to their socio economic background. This effect is indirect and is known as primary effect. This gives a convenience to the government for not taking steps to bring the disadvantaged people to higher education, since there is not much one can do to improve the social origin factors. But, the secondary effects are often neglected with a conviction for Indian students that these effects have still not come to play a role. Results of the present study gives a very clear indication to the manifestation of secondary effects in higher education decisions. The Theory of Planned Behavior, which provides the theoretical framework for the study, has been successful in providing a better understanding of various behaviors. Attitude toward Behavior has significantly predicted the intention of plus one students for going higher education in the present study. It shed light into the necessity of focusing and nurturing the aspects of Attitude

toward Behavior among school students for creating a favorable attitude toward higher education, which in turn results in the maximum utilization of human resource. Level of confidence to proceed in the way of continuing education after plus two irrespective of real life problems and favorable or unfavorable attitude and actions of others especially those who are important and closest to them should be encouraged for successful attainment and completion of higher education.

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